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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 002562

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PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL ON GAERC ISSUES

REF: STATE 183545

Classified By: POL CHIEF TROY FITRELL, REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In advance of the GAERC, Portuguese interlocutors provided a brief on the relevant issues. Amongst other issues, Portugal believes that Kosovo should not have an army, Israel needs to cooperate with the Rafah crossing project, EU support for the Lebanese Armed Forces is mired in a number of problems, and Portugal supports continued sanctions on Uzbekistan. End summary.

¶2. (U) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Deputy Director for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Ana Filomena Rocha provided a review of the MFA's preparations for the reftel November 13-14 European Union (EU) General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) in a November 9 discussion.

¶3. (C) Western Balkans: Rocha agreed on the need for unity between the U.S. and the EU. She noted that Ahtisaari intends to submit his report on Kosovo status by the end of the year. She commented that Serbian elections would only delay this by no more than a month; otherwise Ahtisaari would release his report anyway. She noted that Portugal agrees on the need for an independent Kosovo, but cautioned that the establishment of institutions such as an army should be negotiated over a long period of time. Rocha noted that Bosnia was not on the GAERC agenda.

¶4. (U) Russia: Rocha said that Portugal agreed on the importance of human rights issues regarding relations with Russia. She noted that energy, however, was not on the GAERC agenda.

¶5. (C) Israeli-Palestinian Issues: Rocha stated that no solution to these tensions can be achieved without Palestinian Authority recognition of Israel. Regarding specific assistance, Rocha noted the difficulties the EU had regarding support for the Rafah crossing, which remains essentially closed. She noted that Israel had been particularly difficult on this issue, presenting a list of demands to the EU on issues over which the EU had no control, including release of the captive Israeli soldier. Rocha noted that Portugal would only support the Karni Plan if Rafah was working well, the idea being to duplicate a successful project.

¶6. (C) Lebanon: Rocha stated that Portugal shares the U.S. concerns regarding efforts to weaken or topple Siniora. Rocha noted that the EU will discuss a project with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), but that some states) including Portugal) are concerned about pushing Syria too hard. Additionally, Rocha opined that the other two EU operations in the area are not going well and Portugal has no intention of copying a failing model. Rocha also commented that EU states are concerned about budget and troop contributions. Rocha said EU states are worried about a repeat of Darfur, where grand statements were not followed by

tangible support.

¶7. (C) Iran: Rocha said that neither the nuclear portfolio nor any potential sanctions regime was on the agenda for discussion at the GAERC, although human rights would be discussed. Portugal will maintain its support for Iran,s civil society, but will channel all aid through the United Nations, to avoid bringing state persecution to groups that receive aid or contact from a western state. Rocha noted that Portugal had deep contacts with Iran on social and humanitarian issues that had been severed by Ahmadinejad. The MFA, Rocha noted, had been planning ceremonial events with Iran to commemorate the 500th anniversary of relations between the two societies, but that their primary point of contact in Tehran had been suddenly replaced by a less interested functionary. Rocha noted that lately contact from Tehran on any issue included mention of increased trading relations.

¶8. (C) Uzbekistan: Rocha noted that the EU Troika had a meeting November 9 with a delegation from Uzbekistan to discuss the status of human rights and the consequent effect on Uzbekistan,s relationship with the EU. Discussions at the GAERC, Rocha opined, would follow the tone of the November 9 meeting, particularly in the discussion to prolong EU sanctions. Rocha noted that Germany wanted to lift the sanctions entirely, but that most other states oppose such action. Rocha opined that Germany hoped to achieve an accord with all of the former Soviet states in Asia during its EU Presidency, a task complicated by sanctions on one of them. Portugal, Rocha stated, favored prolonging the sanctions by one year, but lifting restrictions on technical cooperation projects both to maintain contact and to recognize positive steps by Uzbekistan.

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¶9. (U) Cuba: Rocha said Cuba was not on the agenda.
Hoffman